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ABSTRACT

This manual describes a self-monitoring program for use in special education classes and residential treatment programs. The procedure can be adapted to fit almost any program already using daily point sheets or can be used to develop a new program. The procedure requires both student and teacher observation of behaviors and rewards students for positive communication between student and teacher. Guidelines are offered for: (1) selecting goals, (2) determining time periods, (3) establishing a reward system, and (4) making daily use of the forms. An appendix gives directions for completing the daily sheets, examples of some goals, and a sample completed daily sheet. Three slightly varying forms are attached. (DB)

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SELF-MONITORING: AN ALTERNATIVE TO DAILY POINT SHEETS

by:

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Abstract:

This self-monitoring system is similar to the daily point sheets used in many behavior modification programs. It can be adapted to fit almost any program already using daily point sheets. It can serve as the cornerstone for the development of a new program. Unlike most behavior modification programs in which the teacher alone determines if the student's behavior deserves a reward, this self-monitoring system asks both the teacher and the student to pay attention to the student's behavior. In this program the student is rewarded for appropriately discussing why the point was or was not earned. Compared to teacher-evaluated programs this program encourages the students to regularly evaluate their own behavior. It encourages communication between the teacher and students. It discourages angry outbursts which occur when points have not been earned.

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INTRODUCTION

There are almost as many different behavior-modification programs as there are special education classes and residential treatment programs. In most programs the teacher alone determines whether or not the student has behaved appropriately and then provides a positive reinforcer intended to control the student's behavior and, hopefully, teach the student appropriate behavior. The self-monitoring system described in this paper one provides more incentive for the student to actually think about how he has done each recording period and, thus, should enhance learning about what is appropriate. Credit given for discussing recent behavior with the teacher not only encourages further learning about what is appropriate but also discourages angry outbursts which can occur when a student has not earned his points.

This self-monitoring program is an alternative to the daily chips or point sheets used in many special education classes and residential treatment programs. In order to maintain flexibility parts of the program are purposefully left vague and open-ended. This program can serve as the cornerstone for the development of a new behavior modification program or it can be incorporated into a variety of on-going programs.

This program is appropriate for many different student populations. It can help juvenile delinquents learn that certain behaviors result in rewards. Emotionally disturbed and attention deficit students learn to pay closer attention to their own behavior. It has been this author's experience that even students with moderate mental retardation can learn to complete their part of the self-monitoring form and can benefit from learning to accept feedback.

This program is intended to serve as a practical working tool for teachers and other front line workers. This manual has purposefully been kept short and non-technical. In order to simplify grammar and syntax the manual uses the words "teacher" and "student." The "teacher" is the adult in charge; this could be the house-parent, counselor, childcare worker, etc. Likewise, the word "point" stands for that which is earned for appropriate behavior. The terms chip, credit, + mark, etc. can be substituted for the term point.

USE OF THIS SELF-MONITORING PROGRAM

Select goals

Goals should be developed for each student. It is best if goals are written so that they focus on positive behaviors. Problem behaviors can be eliminated by teaching the student an incompatible positive behavior. Two behaviors are considered incompatible if a person cannot do both behaviors at the same time. (Examples: Staying seated is incompatible with running around the room. Speaking politely is incompatible with swearing.) The appendix contains examples of some positive goals and the problem behavior they are incompatible with.

Goals should not be so hard that the student gives up because of continual failure. Goals should not be so easy that the student does not have to try. It is suggested that goals be written so that the student can with some effort initially meet them 50% to 75% of the time. When a student progresses to the point that he is meeting a goal about 95% of the time, the goal should be made more difficult or changed to reflect a different problem.

It is suggested that each student have no more than four goals. When more than four goals are used, tracking becomes too complicated, motivation to work hard on any one area is diminished and pressure to do too much at one time may be overwhelming. For most students it will be easy to come up with three or four different goals of equal importance. However, for some students there may be one problem behavior which needs to be eliminated much more than other problem behaviors; in this case it is suggested that two or three of the goals be the same. This way the student earns many more points for doing well in the area of primary concern.

Determine time periods

At what times during the day points will be awarded must be determined. Ideally each time period should be about the same length. However, practical issues such as when staff will be available to complete the sheets and when natural breaks in the daily schedule occur must also be considered. During the typical high school day, it may be easiest to have lunch and each class period be considered one time period. For elementary school programs recesses, lunch and routine changes from one subject to another may determine the time periods. In residential programs it is usually easiest if one period is before school, several periods are during the school program and a few more periods are in the afternoon and evening.

If at all possible only one teacher should be responsible for each time period. A teacher who did not work with the student during the entire period will find it very difficult to discuss how the student did when the teacher was not there. Some students may take advantage of such an arrangement and simply learn better ways to manipulate teachers.

Because this system can be used with a variety of programs, the appendix contains three different self-monitoring forms. The first form is designed to be used within a school program. The second form is designed to be used in a residential treatment center. The third form is such that, with the use of "white-out" and a typewriter, the form can be modified for other types of programs.

Establish a reward system

A system should be established so that the points earned can be traded for a reward. Many different and appropriate reward systems have already been developed. Some use the points to buy objects at a in-house "store." Others allow students to trade in points for extra outings or to earn extra free time. Still others base privileges earned on the weekly level/phase obtained; a certain number of points is needed to obtain each level. This self-monitoring program can be used with any of these reward systems. If a current way of obtaining points is already in place, it should be necessary only to adjust the number of points needed for each item.

An alternative to group reward systems (i.e. "stores", levels/phases, etc.) is to completely individualize each student's reward system. This can be done by contracting with each student. Contracts can be on a fixed time schedule such as each week or each day. (Examples: If Sue earns 700 points in one week she can go to the Sunday afternoon party. If Joe earns 75 points today he can leave school 30 minutes early.) Contracts can also be on a points earned basis. (Example: Sam's first contract reads "When Sam earns 500 points he can go to the zoo." Once Sam has earned his zoo trip his next contract reads "When Sam earns 800 points he can go to the beach for the afternoon.") Individual contracts provide the student with a greater investment in the program and encourage quality teacher-student interactions. Rivalry can be prevented by making certain that students contract for rewards of similar value and which require similar work.

It is suggested that rewards usually be based upon the total number of points earned in all three areas. However, it may sometimes be advisable to base rewards on only the points obtained from one or two areas. For example, some students will say they

always achieve their goal and frequently refuse to listen to the teacher's feedback. These students may benefit from having only the teacher's points and the discussion points counted towards their reward. Likewise, a student who is doing very well and ready to be phased off an external point system may benefit from having only the points he gives himself counted towards the reward. Other students may benefit from having one area earn points faster than others. For example, if a student's primary problem is an inability to discuss his behavior with others, two points may be given for each time he appropriately discusses his behavior while one point is given for the student section and one point is given for the teacher section. Some autistic or grossly psychotic children may be unable to adequately complete the student section and may find verbal discussion very threatening; these students may do best if only the teacher's section is counted towards the reward.

Daily use of the forms

The appendix contains a one page summary of how the daily form is completed. While the staff and students are learning to use the program, it may be helpful to xerox the instructions onto the back side of the daily form.

Once the program is begun, it should be used consistently. At first students may tend to loose the daily sheet. Working with such students so that they learn to keep track of the daily sheet helps to teach organization and responsibility. For some students a daily goal may even be "I will keep track of my self-monitoring form."

It is important that the students not feel embarrassed or further set apart from "normal" students by the fact they must carry around self-monitoring sheets. Considerable thought should be given to how each student can keep track of his self-monitoring sheet. In the self-contained classroom the sheets can be kept at each student's desk or in a folder on the teacher's desk. If students are expected to carry the sheet from place to place it is suggested that they be taught to keep the sheet in a wallet, fanny-pack, or date book.

APPENDIX

DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE DAILY SHEET

1. For each student list one to four goals. These goals should be written in a positive manner. These goals should focus on behaviors the student is working towards.

2. At the end of each time period have the student fill out the stars for that time period. The following notation is suggested:

   \+ for having achieved the goal
   w for needing to work on achieving the goal. (Not achieving the goal during this time period.)

3. After the student has completed the stars, the teacher completes the clouds for that time period. It is recommended that the teacher use the same notation as the student. Verbal praise should also be given for the goals achieved.

4. The teacher and student should briefly discuss how the student did. (Often this discussion will last no longer than one or two sentences.) How the student does during this discussion should be recorded in the balloon for that time period. The following notation is suggested:

   \+ for appropriate student participation
   w for needing to work on appropriate student participation. (The student behaved inappropriately during the discussion.)

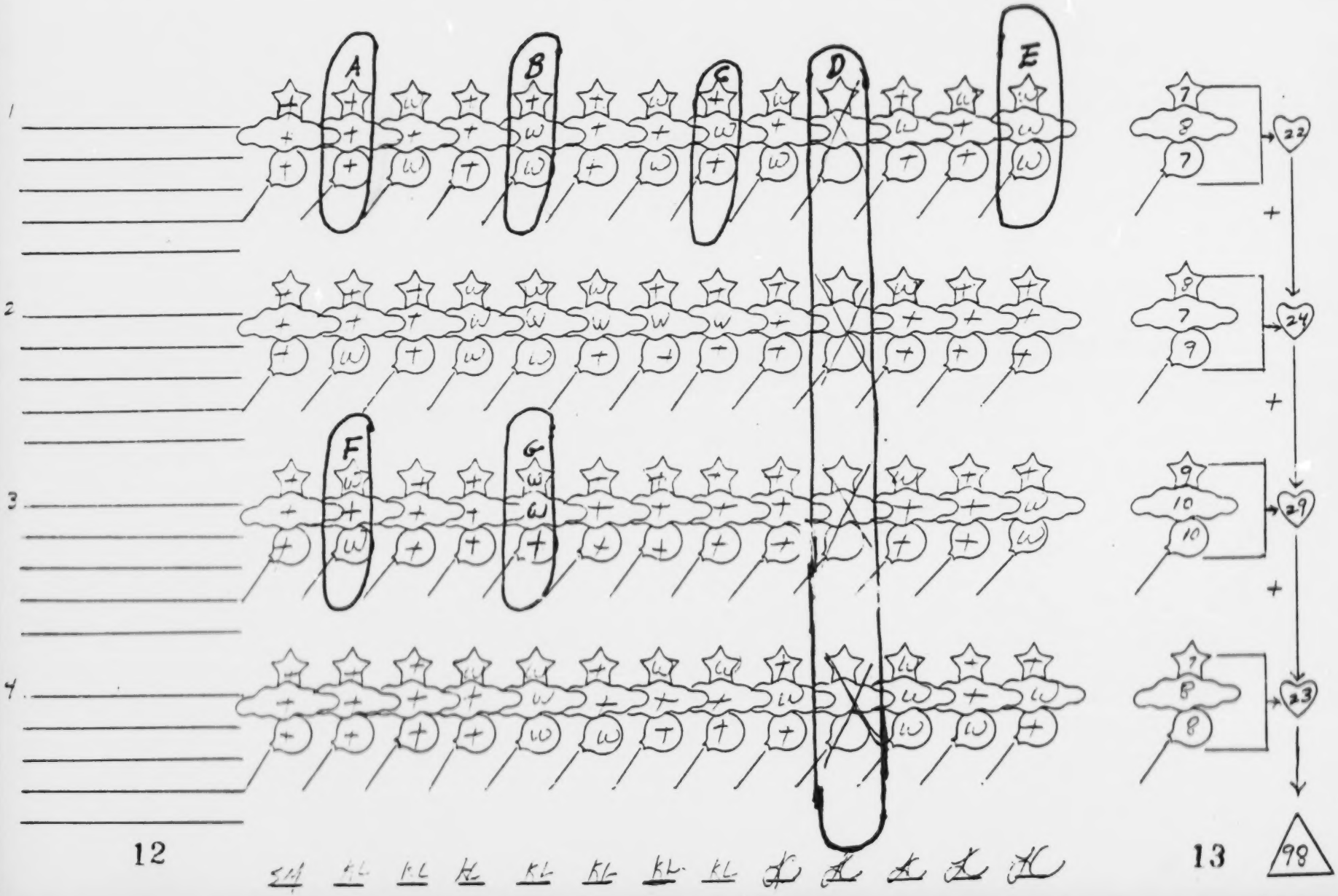
   It is important to remember that the balloon focusses only on how the student did when discussing his behavior with the teacher. If a student does not meet his goals but can "pull it together" long enough to appropriately discuss the past time period, the student still earns credit in this area. A student may continue to disagree with the teacher provided the student expresses the disagreement appropriately.

5. If there is more than one staff member, the staff completing each time period places his/her initials on the line which corresponds to the time period.

6. At the end of each day, add up the number of "+" marks for each row. This information is recorded in the "totals" column of the daily sheet. Add totals in the star, cloud and balloon score for each goal; record this in the heart. Finally add the heart score of all goals together and record it in the triangle.

GOALS: Some examples

Possible goal		Problem behaviors addressed
1.	I will remain in my seat.	hyperactive, disruptive, frequently walks around the classroom.
2.	I will raise my hand when I need something.	calls out, bangs on desk for attention, interrupts others
3.	I will be polite and kind to others.	bullies, bosses, is aggressive
4.	I will concentrate on my work.	restless, inattentive, short attention span, frequently talks to other students
5.	I will listen to and follow directions.	inattentive, noncompliant, constantly does things own way.
6.	I will use only polite language.	swears, bosses
7.	I will act respectfully towards others.	swears, bosses, is rude, is assaultive, provokes others
8.	I will talk about what upsets me.	Hits/kicks/throws things when upset; has temper tantrums.
9.	I will act respectfully towards myself.	self-injurious behavior, continual self-criticisms, low self-esteem.
10.	I will make at least one positive statement about myself.	low self-esteem
11.	I will respect the property of others.	stealing, property destruction
12.	I will use my time wisely.	wastes time, daydreams
13.	I will keep my hands and my feet to myself.	fights, trips others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COMPLETED DAILY SHEET: an example

On the next page is an example of a completed daily sheet. Seven situations are circled because they indicate possible responses during a time period. The situations are discussed below:

A. In this example the student and the teacher agreed that the goal had been met.

B. In this example the student indicated that the goal was met. This teacher did not think the goal was met. The student became angry at the teacher's "W" and refused to discuss the issue.

C. In this example the student indicated that the goal was met. This teacher did not think the goal was met. The student was willing to listen to the teacher's explanation of why the goal was not met.

D. This example illustrates how a teacher can indicate that there was no chance to complete the sheet during a specific time period. Crossing out the boxes prevents students from adding unearned points to blank spaces.

E. In this example the student admitted that the goal was not met. The teacher agreed that the goal was not met. The student was unwilling to discuss what had happened.

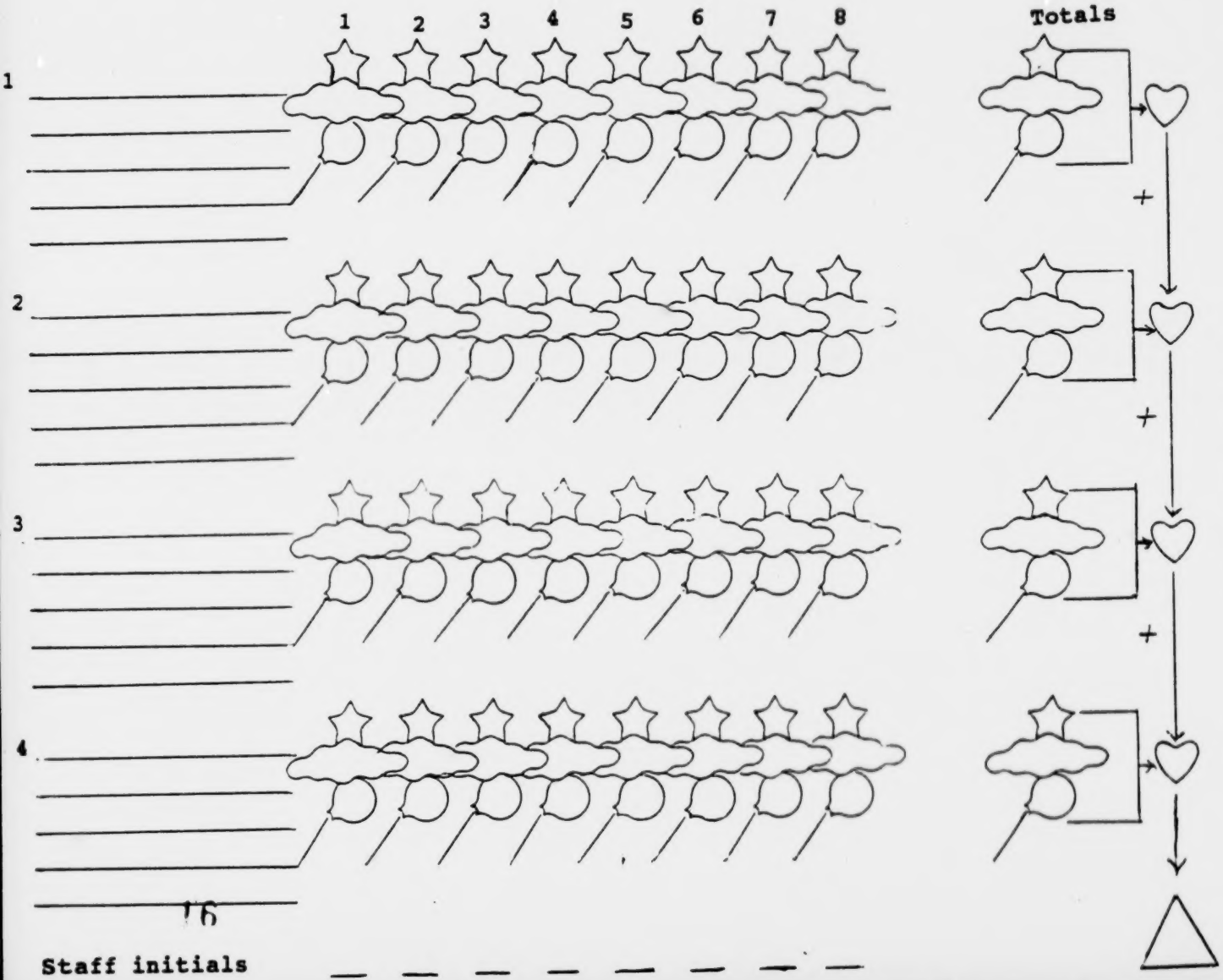
F. In this example the student did not believe he had met his goal. The teacher thought that the goal had been met. The student refused to listen to the teacher's praise and discussion of how the goal was met.

G. In this example the student admitted that the goal was not met. The teacher agreed that the goal was not met. The teacher and student discussed the problems and how the student could do better next time.

DAILY SHEET FORMS

Name: _____

Date: _____

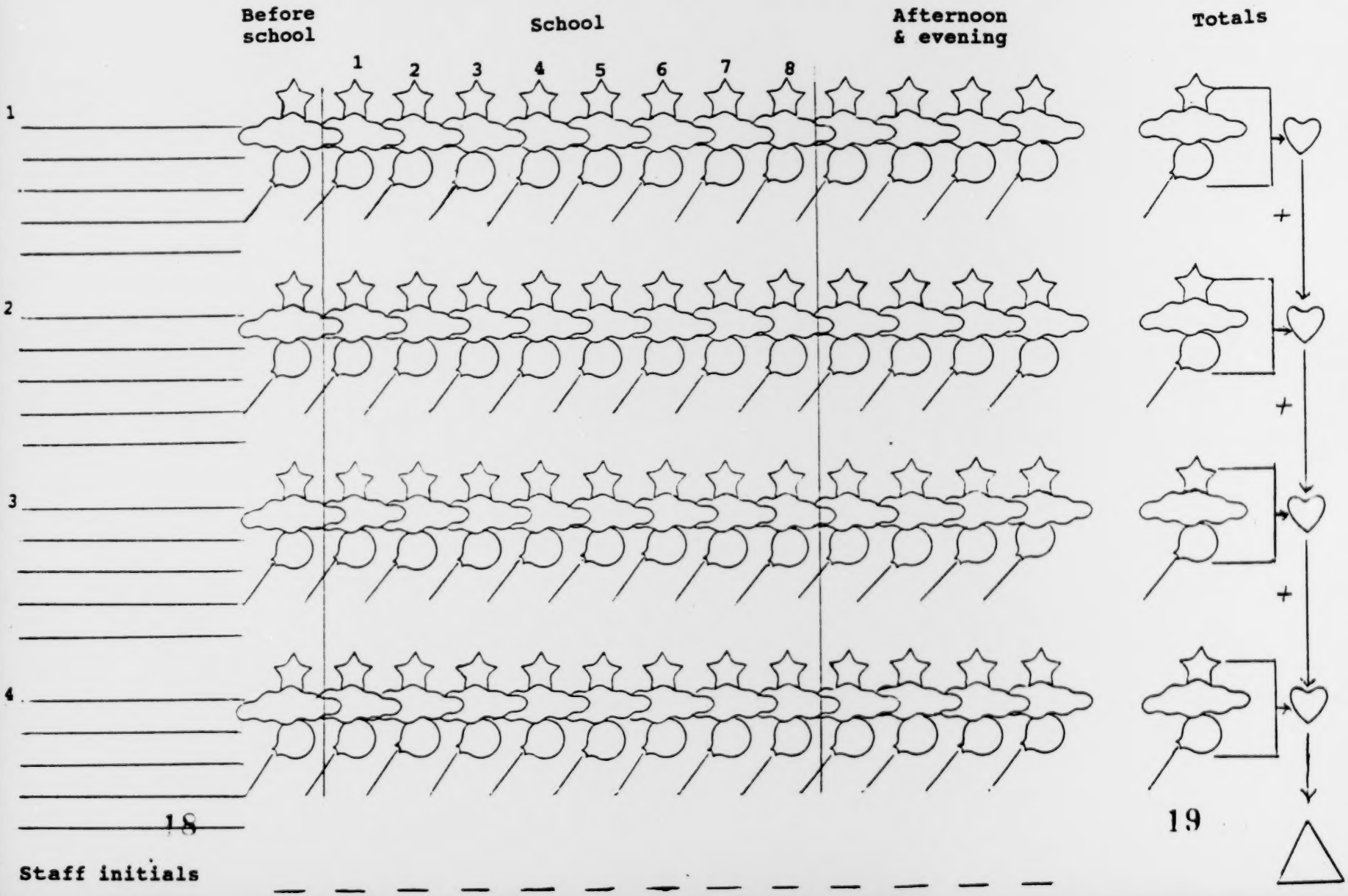


Staff initials _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Comments

Name: _____

Date: _____



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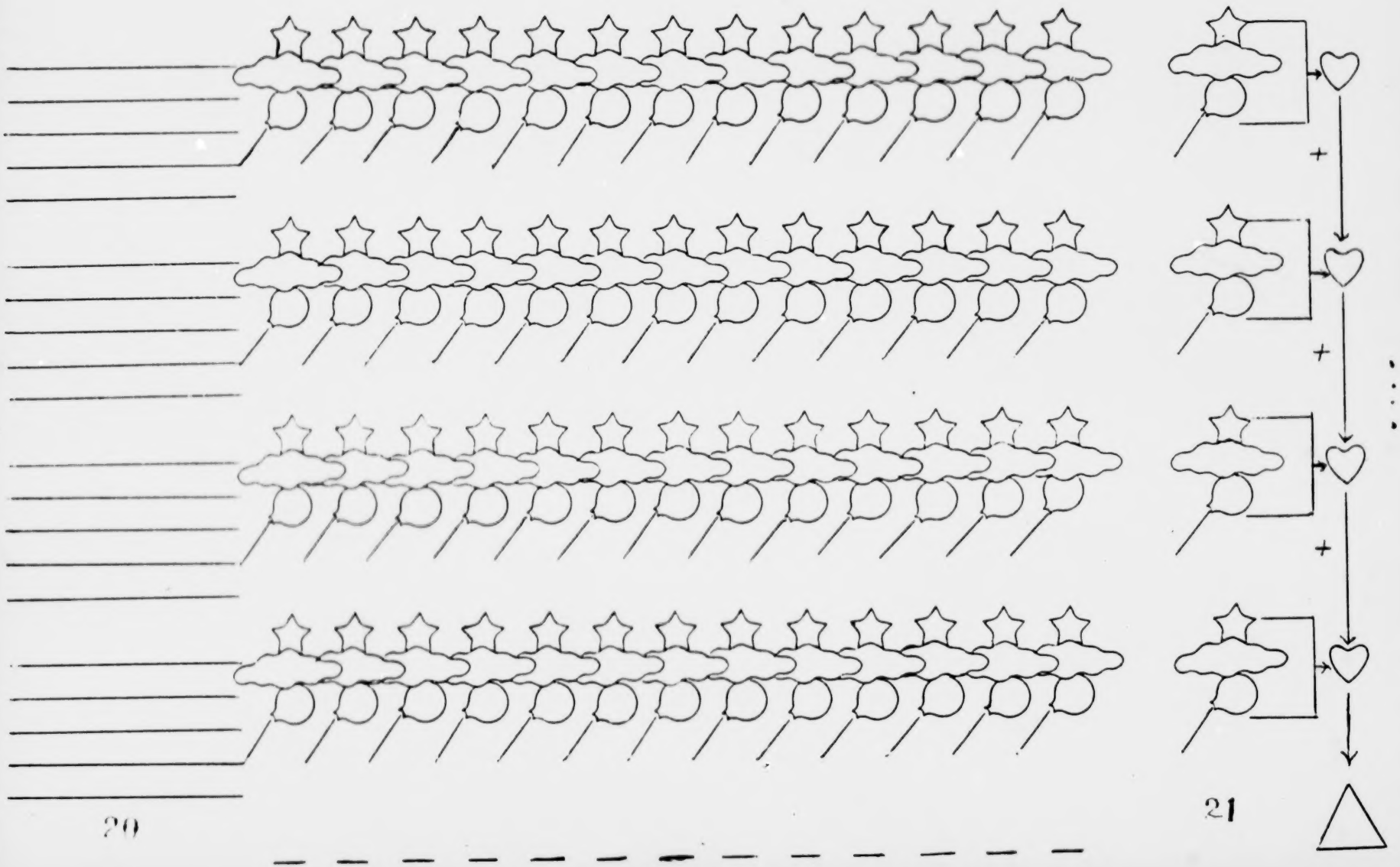
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